

quick bite. Downstairs, in the carry-out, you can find the whole Capitol family, as Steve calls them; “the white collars, the blue collars, the green collars, and the Capitol Police,” all eating together.

It is a little like stepping back into a better, less partisan time.

On Friday, December 22, Steve Johnson is leaving the Senate. He is retiring. Before he does, I want to take a moment to thank Steve for his many years of good and loyal service to the Senate.

Until 1995, when Steve began working as a maitre d’ in the Senate Dining Room, he had never seen the inside of the U.S. Capitol, but he had seen the outside of this magnificent building many times.

You see, Steve grew up in Freehold, NJ, home of “The Boss,” Bruce Springsteen. He was one of six kids. His mom trained as a nurse, and his dad was a director of a YMCA.

In 1963, Steve’s Dad, Herbert, attended the March on Washington, where Martin Luther King gave his “I Have a Dream” speech. The experience made a profound impression.

During Steve’s childhood and teen years, whenever there was a big march or rally in Washington, the whole Johnson family—mom, dad, and six kids—would pile into the family station wagon, drive to Washington, DC, for the day, and drive back to Freehold that night.

During those childhood trips, Steve developed a reverence for this building. After 22 years of working here, he still has it. He is still awed when he sees the Capitol dome gleaming in the sun as he arrives at work, or sees the Capitol Christmas tree lit up at night.

It is a feeling that many of us share.

Steve started his career in food service nearly 40 years ago, shortly after he graduated from Glassboro State College in New Jersey with a bachelor’s degree in business administration. He went to work at a restaurant in his hometown.

A few years later, he and a business partner took over running a more than 200-year-old inn, the Liberty Tavern, in New Jersey’s capitol city of Trenton. They gave it their best try, with clever marketing and a hard-working staff, but couldn’t make good of it.

Fortunately for us, Steve’s wife, Joanne, took a job with the Federal Government in Washington, and Steve made the move with her.

Before the Senate, he worked at the Mayflower Hotel, another Washington legend. As I mentioned, he started in the Senate Dining Room as maitre d’ and worked his way up to assistant general manager and finally general manager.

He works incredibly hard, from early in the morning until evening or later. With his calm demeanor, he makes a tough job look almost easy.

That calm may have something to do with the fact that Steve is a dedicated marathon runner. He has run 18 mara-

thons, including seven Boston Marathons.

He is a modest man in a sea of big egos, a scrupulously nonpartisan man in era of sharp partisan lines. He and his dedicated staff are important members of the Senate family.

There is a line in a Bruce Springsteen song where Bruce says, “I’m ready to grow young again.”

Sadly, none of us can actually do that.

But Steve has decided that he is ready to be a rookie again and try something completely new and different. In this next chapter of his life, he will work as a volunteer literacy tutor for adults who speak English as a Second Language.

It is another way, I think, of making people feel at home and cared for, something that Steve Johnson is so good at.

In closing, I want to thank Steve again for his many years of service to the Senate, and I want to wish Steve and Joanne the very best of luck as they start this new chapter in their lives.

#### HONDURAS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, on Monday, the head of the Honduras Supreme Electoral Tribunal declared Juan Orlando Hernandez the next President of Honduras. Shortly thereafter, the Secretariat of the Organization of American States, one of the principal international observers, announced that it could not certify the election as free and fair and called for a new election. Yesterday, after his top advisers rebuked the OAS for infringing on Honduras’s sovereignty, President Hernandez, stating that “the Honduran people have spoken,” declared himself President-elect.

On December 5, I spoke at length about the Honduran election, and I have made several statements since then. I will not repeat what I and many others have already said about the troubling process orchestrated by President Hernandez and his associates over the past several years to lay the groundwork for his reelection for an unprecedented second Presidential term, nor about the many irregularities that have caused masses of people to take to the streets in protest since the vote on November 26. As of today, at least 12 protesters, and perhaps as many as 20, have been killed and many more injured, mostly from military police firing live ammunition. I was disappointed that, in his speech yesterday, President Hernandez made no mention of those tragic deaths.

As we await the Trump administration’s decision on whether to support the OAS’s call for a new election or accept President Hernandez’ claim to a second term, I want to make three points.

First, if this flawed election had been held in a country not led by a President whose consolidation of power and

reliance on the military and police have had the strong backing of the White House and the State Department, it is doubtful that it would be accepted as free and fair. Instead, the White House, which has been willing to excuse the Hernandez government’s corruption scandals and crackdown on the press and civil society, would likely be calling for a recount or, if the integrity of the ballots could not be assured, a new election.

Second, the OAS deserves the thanks of people throughout this hemisphere for the role it has played as an impartial observer and for standing up for a free and fair election in Honduras at a time when democratic processes, freedom of expression and association, and independent judiciaries are threatened not only in Honduras but in many parts of Latin America. Next year, Presidential and Parliamentary elections are scheduled in many countries in Central and South America, and the OAS, which has been a strong defender of democracy and human rights in Venezuela, has a vital role to play in seeking to ensure that those elections meet international standards of fairness and transparency. It is therefore particularly important and reassuring that the OAS Secretariat has insisted on such standards in Honduras by calling for a new election, and it is just as important that the United States stands with the OAS at this time.

Third, it is ultimately for the people of Honduras to decide what kind of a government they want and whether to accept the result declared by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, which has little credibility outside of President Hernandez’s National Party. It is clear that the country is sharply divided politically, socially, and economically. Absent an electoral process that is widely accepted as free and fair, that divisiveness will imperil the progress that is urgently needed in combating poverty, violence, organized crime, corruption, and impunity that pose immense challenges for the future.

But the international community and particularly the people of this hemisphere also have a stake in this election and in Honduras’s future. In the past decade alone, the United States has provided many hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to Honduras, much of which I supported, but that aid has not achieved the results that the Honduran people and we wanted, and the reason for that, I believe, is primarily because successive Honduran Governments were not serious about addressing many of the key problems I have mentioned, yet the aid kept flowing. Unfortunately, I am not convinced that the current government is sufficiently serious about this, either.

Honduras today desperately needs a freely and fairly elected leader who can unite the country. Unfortunately, this election lacked the conditions of fairness and transparency necessary to produce that result. If a new election is

held under such conditions, it is entirely possible that President Hernandez may win—or he may not. But for him, or any candidate, to obtain the mandate required to unite the country and make a credible case that his government is a deserving partner of the United States, it will need to be by rejecting the serious flaws of this election and demonstrating to all the people of Honduras and this hemisphere what real democracy looks like.

I ask unanimous consent that today's Bloomberg View editorial calling for a new democratic election in Honduras be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE U.S. SHOULD BACK NEW ELECTIONS IN HONDURAS

(By James Gibney and Michael Newman)

LATIN AMERICA NEEDS TO START ITS BIG ELECTION YEAR ON THE RIGHT FOOT

There is only one way out of Honduras's deepening political crisis, and that is a new presidential election. It's a solution the U.S., with its long history in Latin America, should help bring about—although it would help if it had an ambassador there.

The certification this week of incumbent President Juan Orlando Hernandez's contested victory in last month's election has brought Hondurans into the streets, continuing a wave of violent demonstrations that have claimed at least 24 lives. It comes after a deeply flawed ballot-counting process that included long delays, after which Hernandez's early deficit mysteriously disappeared. (The final tally put him ahead by about 1.5 percent.) The vote was denounced by numerous observers—including the Organization of American States, which has called for new elections.

Yet the U.S., which has no ambassador in Tegucigalpa or an assistant secretary of State for the hemisphere, has been only mildly critical. When Hernandez's victory was certified, it urged opposing political parties to "raise any concerns they may have." And just after the disputed election, the State Department renewed aid to Honduras—a move widely interpreted as tacit support for Hernandez.

Hernandez has won friends in Washington with his willingness to crack down on crime and illegal migration to the U.S., and his investor-friendly policies. At the same time, his administration has been responsible for ugly human rights abuses and been implicated in several high-profile corruption scandals. Moreover, he has extended his tenure only by packing Honduras's Supreme Court to lift the country's one-term limit for presidents. The head of the court responsible for certifying election results is one of Hernandez's close allies.

Even before last month's flawed vote, Honduras was notable for the lack of popular confidence in its electoral mechanisms. And if it's stability that Washington seeks, these disputed results don't promise to achieve it. Protracted unrest will only make fighting drugs and illegal migration harder.

The contrast between the OAS and the U.S. could also hurt U.S. influence and credibility. The U.S. has rightly supported the OAS in its efforts to hold Venezuela accountable for its electoral crimes. If it fails to do the same in Honduras, it risks setting a dangerous double standard. This would be especially damaging in a year when nearly two out of three Latin Americans are scheduled to go to the polls.

As the administration's just-released National Security Strategy says, "Stable, friendly, and prosperous states in the Western Hemisphere enhance our security and benefit our economy." The best way to ensure that Honduras becomes one is to support free, transparent and fair elections.

NOMINATION OBJECTION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I intend to object to any unanimous consent requests at the present time relating to the nominations of David J. Ryder, of New Jersey, to be Director of the Mint, and of Isabel Marie Keenan Patelunas, of Pennsylvania, to be Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of the Treasury.

I will object because the Department of the Treasury has failed to respond to a letter I sent on September 29, 2017, to a bureau within the Department seeking documents relevant to an ongoing investigation by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. Despite several phone calls between committee staff and Treasury personnel to prioritize particular requests within that letter, the Treasury Department has to date failed to provide any documents.

My objection is not intended to question the credentials of Mr. Ryder or Ms. Patelunas in any way. However, the Department must recognize that it has an ongoing obligation to respond to congressional inquiries in a timely and reasonable manner.

ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, in 2008, the Senate took up the question of whether to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I wasn't here at the time, but I remember the issue prompted a rigorous debate.

The Senate spent months on the topic. Experts weighed in, and the American people had a chance to share their views in a fairly open process.

It is worth pausing to recall the context for that discussion. In 2008, America produced nearly 7 million barrels of oil a day and imported another 12 million. The price of oil was roughly \$150 a barrel. There was talk about the world hitting "peak oil."

In that context, one side claimed that drilling in the Arctic Refuge was needed to boost domestic production, reduce foreign imports, and lower prices at the pump. The other side countered that any economic benefit from drilling was far outweighed by the need to preserve the Arctic Refuge, a jewel of our public lands, a vital habitat for wildlife, and a sacred place for the Gwich'in people—a place so sacred they are reluctant to even enter it.

In the end, after weighing the facts and considering the costs, 56 Senators, included 6 Republicans, voted to protect the Arctic Refuge from drilling.

That was 2008. Now fast forward to 2017. The Arctic Refuge remains a jewel of our public lands. It remains a vital

habitat for so many flora and fauna. It remains a sacred place for local tribes, and one of America's most spectacular wild places. The case for preservation has not changed.

By contrast, the case for drilling has never been weaker. Compared to 2008, domestic oil production has nearly doubled. Oil imports are down 22 percent. The price of oil has fallen 50 percent. Terminals we built to import oil and gas are now being used to export oil and gas.

For all these reasons, unlike 2008, oil companies are not clamoring for more opportunities to drill. Just last week, oil companies had the chance to bid on 10.3 million acres open for drilling in Alaska. In the end, less than 1 percent of the land was leased.

Think about that. We are not even using all of the land now available for drilling in Alaska. It defies reason that we would open up even more, especially in a place as treasured as the Arctic Refuge.

All of this is to say that, if it made little sense to drill in 2008, it makes no sense to drill now.

So it should surprise no one that the other side doesn't want a real debate. That is why they tucked this into their massive tax bill, hoping to sneak it in under the hood.

Their justification? We need revenue from the oil to pay down the deficit that we are creating with this tax bill.

There are two problems with that. First, the Congressional Budget Office found that, because of low demand, revenue from drilling would be far less than projected, potentially hundreds of millions less.

Second, the only reason we are having this conversation is because the other side wants to spend \$1.4 trillion on tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest Americans.

Consider this: Their plan spends \$37 billion to give an average tax cut of \$64,000 to those lucky enough to make over \$1 million a year.

To help pay for that, we are about to drill in one of the most stunning places in America.

I am not opposed to oil and gas production. We need transition fuels as we move toward low-carbon, renewable energy. I also recognize that, for many small towns across America, the oil and gas sector is a rare source of steady, high-paying jobs.

In Colorado, we have managed to increase energy production to meet our growing demand. But we have done so in a way that protects our public lands and creates jobs, for those in oil and gas and our thriving outdoor economy. We have found a way for all sides to win.

If my colleagues from Alaska want to increase energy production, create jobs, and spur growth, I stand ready to help, but let's not pretend that drilling in the Arctic Refuge is the only way to do that.

There are places in America where you can set up an oil rig, lay down